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Statement of purpose

Taking stock of the universe of positions and goals that constitutes leftist politics today, we are left with the disquieting suspicion that a deep commonality underlies the apparent variety: What exists today is built upon the desiccated remains of what was once possible.

In order to make sense of the present, we find it necessary to disentangle the vast accumulation of positions on the Left and to evaluate their saliency for the possible reconstitution of emancipatory politics in the present. Doing this implies a reconsideration of what is meant by the Left.

Our task begins from what we see as the general disenchantment with the present state of progressive politics. We feel that this disenchantment cannot be cast off by sheer will, by simply "carrying on the fight," but must be addressed and itself made an object of critique. Thus we begin with what immediately confronts us.

The *Platypus Review* is motivated by its sense that the Left is disoriented. We seek to be a forum among a variety of tendencies and approaches on the Left—not out of a concern with inclusion for its own sake, but rather to provoke disagreement and to open shared goals as sites of contestation. In this way, the recriminations and accusations arising from political disputes of the past may be harnessed to the project of clarifying the object of leftist critique.

The *Platypus Review* hopes to create and sustain a space for interrogating and clarifying positions and orientations currently represented on the Left, a space in which questions may be raised and discussions pursued that would not otherwise take place. As long as submissions exhibit a genuine commitment to this project, all kinds of content will be considered for publication.

Submission guidelines
Articles will typically range in length from 750–4,500 words, but longer pieces will be considered. Please send article submissions and inquiries about this project to: *review_editor@platypus1917.org.* All submissions should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

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Why not Trump again?

Chris Cutrone

Presented with an introduction to Marxism in the Age of Trump *(2018)*[1] *and "Why I wish Hillary had won"*[2] *at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, December 4, 2019. Video recording of presentation and audience Q&A discussion available online at: <https://youtu.be/EaOfsnrmSo0>*

"Nothing's ever promised tomorrow today. . . . It hurts but it might be the only way."
— Kanye West, "Heard 'Em Say" (2005)

"You can't always get what you want / But if you try, sometimes you find / You get what you need."
— The Rolling Stones (1969)

KANYE WEST FAMOUSLY INDICTED PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH for "not caring about black people." Mr. West now says that it's the Democrats who don't care about black people. But he thinks that Trump does indeed care.

West, who received an honorary doctoral degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago a few years ago, intends to move back to Chicago from Hollywood, which he describes as The Sunken Place.

West's wife Kim Kardashian convinced President Trump to free Alice Johnson, a black grandmother, from jail, and to initiate the criminal justice sentencing reform legislation called the "First Step Act." Prisoners are being released to join the workforce in which the demand for labor has been massively increased in the economic recovery under the Trump Administration. The reason for any such reform now, after the end of the Great Recession, will be this demand for workers — no longer the need to warehouse the unemployed.

Trump ran on and won election calling for "jobs, jobs, jobs!," and now defines his Republican Party as standing for the "right to life and the dignity of work," which was his definition of what "Make America Great Again" meant to him. This will be the basis now for his reelection in November 2020, for "promises kept."

The current impeachment farce is indeed what Trump calls it: the Democrats motivated by outrage at his exposure of their shameless political corruption, with the Biden family prominently featured. After trouncing the infamous Clintons in 2016, Trump is keeping this drumbeat going for 2020. Don't expect it to stop. The Democrats have wanted to impeach Trump from the moment he was elected, indeed even beforehand, but finally got around to it when Trump exposed them — exposed their "frontrunner."

Trump has held out the offer of bipartisan cooperation on everything from trade to immigration reform. He went so far as to say, when congratulating the Democrats on their 2018 midterm election victories, that he would be potentially more able to realize his agenda with a Democrat-majority Congress, because he would no longer have to face resistance from established mainstream Republicans opposed to his policies. In his State of the Union Address to Congress this year, Trump contrasted the offer of negotiation and cooperation with the threat of investigations. As it turns out, the FBI, CIA and other U.S. government security services personnel who have tried to indict Trump out of political opposition are now finding themselves the targets of criminal investigation. At least some of them are likely go to prison. The bloated national security state is dismayed and in retreat in the face of Trump. — Good!

What is the argument against Trump's reelection? That he is utterly unbearable as a President of the United States? That Trump must be stopped because the world is running out of time? Either in terms of the time spent by separated children being held under atrocious conditions in appalling immigration detention centers, or that of glaciers falling into the ocean? Both of these will continue unabated, with or without Trump. The Democrats neither can nor will put a stop to such things — not even slow them.

What is the argument for electing the Democrats, then? A Green New Deal? — Will never happen: Obama promised it already in 2008. That they will restore "civility" to American life? Like we had under Obama? In other words, the same conditions, but with a comforting smile instead of an irritating smirk?

But Trump's supporters became annoyed with Obama, and have been reassured by Trump's confidence in America: Trump's smile is not sarcastic; Obama's often was. Don't the Democrats deserve that grin?

Will the Democrats provide free quality health care for all? — Not on your life!

Neither will Trump. But not because he doesn't want to: he definitely does; he thinks that it's absurd that the wealthiest country in world history cannot provide for its citizens. But what can you do?

The last time national health care was floated as a proposal was by Nixon. But it was defeated by Democrats as well as Republicans. Nixon floated UBI (Universal Basic Income), too — but it was opposed by the Democrats, especially by their labor unions, who — rightly — said that employers would use it as an excuse to pay workers that much less. Abortion was legalized when fewer workers were needed.

But that was a different time — before the general economic downturn after 1973 that led to the last generation of neoliberalism, austerity and a society of defensive self-regard and pessimism. Now, it is likely we are heading into a new generation-long period of capitalist growth — and optimism. — At least, it's possible. Nixon and Mao agreed that "what the Left proposes we [the Right] push through."

Are we on the brink of a new, post-neoliberal Progressive era, then? Don't count on it — at least not with the Democrats! They won't let their Presidential nominee next year be Bernie Sanders. — Probably, they won't even let it be Warren, either. And anyway, after Obama, no one is really going to believe them. Even if Bernie were to be elected President, he would face a hostile Democratic Party as well as Republicans in Congress. It's unlikely the Squad of AOC et al. will continue to be reelected at all, let alone expand their ranks of Democratic "socialists" in elected office. The DSA (Democratic Socialists of America) have already peaked, even before the thankless misery of canvassing for Democrats — not "socialists" — in the next election. The future belongs not to them, but to Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping hosted by Trump at Mar-a-Lago. Climate change must be stopped by China.

(The clearest indicator of American counties voting for Trump in 2016 was density of military families — not due to patriotism but war fatigue: Trump has fulfilled his promise to withdraw from the War on Terror interventions while funding the military, and is the peace President that Obama was supposed to be, drawing down and seeking negotiated settlements with the peace President that Obama was supposed to be, drawing down and seeking negotiated settlements with Iran and the Taliban in Afghanistan; the Neocons are out and flocking to the Democrats.)

The arguments against Trump by the Democrats have been pessimistic and conservative, distrustful and even suspicious of American voters — to which he opposes an unflappable confidence and optimism, based in faith in American society. Trump considers those who vote against him to be mistaken, not enemies. But the Democrats consider Trump voters to be inimical — deplorable and even irredeemable.

My Muslim friends who oppose Trump — half of them support Trump — said that after his election in 2016 they found their neighbors looking at them differently — suspiciously. But I think it made them look at Americans differently — suspiciously. But it's the same country that elected Obama twice.

If Trump's America is really the hateful place Democrats paint it to be, for instance at their LGBTQ+ CNN Town Hall, at which protesters voiced the extreme vulnerability of "trans women of color," then it must be admitted that such violence is perpetrated primarily not by rich straight white men so much as by "cis-gendered heterosexual men — and women — of color." — Should we keep them in jail?

The Democrats' only answer to racism, sexism and homophobia is to fire people and put them in prison. — Whereas Trump lets them out of jail to give them a job. Perhaps their getting a job will help us, too.

So: Why not Trump again? | **P**

Robots and sweatshops

Chris Cutrone

STARTING WITH THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, there have been two contrary tendencies in the development of social production: increased automation lowering socially necessary labor-time; and the desperation of people rendered superfluous as workers.

For Marxism, this presented a social and political task for the working class to demand higher wages for fewer hours.

An alternative to this would be for workers to try to fight against technology — the Luddites.

Conversely, the capitalists could invest in machines instead of labor.

Thus was born the antagonism between wage-labor and capital.

The outcome of the class struggle between the workers and capitalists was to be the realization of the potential for both increased production and the reduction of human toil: socialism.

However, since machine production created a permanent class of unemployed people, there would always be a demand for work that could be exploited by the capitalists to pay lower wages.

Paying lower wages decreases the market for produced goods, which means a drive for higher profitability, leading to further pursuit of cost-efficiency in production as well as depression of wages.

That leads to both robots and sweatshops.

Disparities and imbalances between capitalist profits and workers' wages lead to periodic crises in which there is money that cannot find profitable investment and workers who cannot find employment.

But eventually balance is restored through the cheapening of money-capital — and the cheapening of labor.

New forms of work are developed to serve new technologies of production. — Until the next crisis begins the cycle all over again.

This meant that the working class as a whole — both employed and unemployed — needed to be organized as a social and political force to ensure increased social wealth and to prevent exploitation.

Since this is a matter of the organization of society as a whole — including internationally, and indeed globally, in the cosmopolitan exchange of wage-labor and capital — it requires the political act of taking state power: world socialist revolution. | **P**

1 Platypus Publishing: <https://platypus1917.org/publishing/>.
2 *Platypus Review* 108 (July–August 2018), available on-line at: <https://platypus1917.org/2018/07/30/why-i-wish-hillary-had-won-distractions-of-anti-trump-ism/>.

Labour once more

Efraim Carlebach

Author's note: This article was originally presented as a teach-in on the history of the Labour Left[1] given to the Platypus chapter at the London School of Economics on December 5, 2019, a week before the UK election, in which Boris Johnson's Conservatives won a landslide majority and inflicted a resounding defeat on Jeremy Corbyn's Labour. The argument follows that of my article "'Last illusions': The Labour Party and the Left," published in issue 97 of this review in 2017.[2] Not much has changed since 2017 nor since the election results were announced in December.

Foreword: after the election

IN THE BUBBLE OF ELITE UNIVERSITIES and among circles of urban young professionals, where Leftists dedicated many hours to door-knocking for Labour, a false optimism about Labour's chances was betrayed by the insistence that anyone who did not join in it was morally suspect. Gone were questions about socialism and how Labour was to be "transformed." Meanwhile, Corbynism had only continued Blair's yuppification of the Labour party. The Corbynistas were in for a shock.[3] "Look at all those white people!" said a woman next to me, with palpable disdain, at a watching party as the result came in from Blythe Valley. She's clearly never been to the northeast. Totally disoriented by Brexit, the Left — which had bet everything on Corbynism — became the last defenders of neoliberalism.

The Conservative victory has exacerbated the pre-existing division on the Left between those who favored an orientation towards pro-Brexit voters in the post-industrial "heartlands" and those who favored an orientation towards the "progressive" alliance of students, ethnic minorities and precarious urban workers. Rather than raising fundamental questions for the Left, the defeat allows both sides to double down on their Labour orientation, arguing about what could have been. Both sides call it "Labour's loss," avoiding mention of the Conservatives' victory. Both sides propound the myth that a Labour government would be somehow closer to "socialism" than a Conservative one.

Those who backed a pro-Brexit orientation to revive a "Left populism" are right to point out the working class's revolt against Labour, but they are ambivalent about it, fumbling around with a pre-neoliberal vision of social democracy, which is never going to return. This orientation obscures the question of post-neoliberalism, as its proponents imagine a simple reversal of neoliberalism at the level of policy backed by restored party institutions. The real crisis of post-war social democracy and the emergence of the New Left is avoided. "Working-class independence" is understood simply sociologically, as against the "professional managerial class" they chide. The Marxist concept of political independence is avoided.

Those on the "far Left" who have been committed for four years to justifying support for Corbyn and "socialism" now claim they knew it was never going to work, falling back on their old demands for extra-parliamentary street protests. Lindsey German and Tariq Ali will try to revive the Stop the War Coalition, but capitalist politics is not about to return to 2003. Socialist Appeal/IMT, which campaigned for a Labour government "with socialist policies," told their activists, "Don't believe the polls or pessimists — we can win!"[4] Now they are reorienting towards global protests with their Marxist Student Federation Conference theme "World in Revolt" (last year it was "The fight for socialism today"). But a sharp turn may throw off many of those politicized by Corbynism, who will be happy to settle for Rebecca Long-Bailey or Clive Lewis (or even Keir Starmer) and depoliticized disgust with "evil Tories" — that thorny thought taboo which the Left has taught to another generation. The symbiotic relation between the Labour Left and Right rolls on.

Symbiotic relationship

The near universal support for Corbyn's Labour party from the Left has been the latest chapter of its decomposition, in which the Left has adapted itself to changes within capitalism, claiming out of despair that each new thing is the chance in the fight for socialism, and then, when it turns out not to be so, supporting it anyway. The Left has become conservative, opposing changes in capitalism, thus avoiding the question of how such changes point to new possibilities. Millennials who joined ostensibly revolutionary organizations in the anti-war or anti-austerity protests all settled for Corbyn's "kinder, gentler politics."

I concluded my 2017 article on Labour and the Left with Hillel Ticktin's assessment of Corbyn and McDonnell: "While Corbyn and McDonnell both talk about socialism, they are not even very radical, let alone socialist."[5] The Labour Right, however, stigmatized McDonell's meager policies as "socialist." Ticktin noted that this "shows the nature of rightwing Labour — it does not understand the system it is supporting." I agreed, adding: "What does it show about the Left today that they share the same fantasy?" That is, the fantasy that this has anything to do with socialism, a term that in 2016 was really just a label for being passionately anti-Trump or anti-Brexit.

A week before the election, even such fantastical talk of socialism has been dropped in favor of just defending the NHS and stopping Brexit, for which perhaps millions of working-class voters will abandon Labour for the Tories — indeed, many already have.

The attempts to "transform" the Labour party have failed. There have been at least three different splits from Momentum, going back to early 2017. All of these have fizzled out, yet their disgruntled leaders will still support Labour. The idea that it wasn't about supporting Corbyn but "transforming Labour" turns out to have been an enabling myth.

Remember when Leftists said that backing the Labour Left to revive social democracy was a dead end? Like when Mark Fisher wrote in 2009 that "capitalist realism need not be neoliberal… capitalism could revert to a model of social democracy… Without a credible and coherent alternative to capitalism, capitalist realism will continue"?[6] Or when the Sparticist League argued that there was "no choice" between Tony Benn and Neil Kinnock in 1988?[7] But once the "fight in the Labour party" was on in 2016, everyone from Fisher to the Sparts supported Corbyn, the former believing that we were riding a "wave… towards post-capitalism"[8] and the latter declaring Labour's internal disputes to be a "class war."[9]

The Left has been caught up in what the Sparticist League described acutely in 1988 as a "symbiotic relationship":

> "Benn's campaign has been portrayed by the bourgeois press and most of the ostensibly socialist left as a David and Goliath battle for the 'socialist soul' of the party against Kinnock/Hattersley's overt scabbing and 'new realism.' But the Labour 'lefts' indulgence in the timeworn reformist rhetoric of the parliamentary road to democratic socialism, 'unilateralism,' non-alignment, disarmament and nationalist 'Little England' protectionism is no alternative to Kinnock's more reactionary agenda for class peace in Thatcher's Britain. Indeed, this contest reflects the classic and historic symbiotic relation between the Labour 'left' and right that has maintained the party for decades as the primary obstacle to proletarian revolution on these isles."[10]

Since 2015, Corbyn's leadership of the Labour party has been presented in similar histrionic terms, "a David and Goliath battle for the 'socialist soul' of the party." The illusion of fighting the Right, whether within the Labour party, or supporting the Labour party in whatever form just to "kick the Tories out," has replenished the Labour party with activists for generations and kept the Left chained to its tail.

What is this symbiotic relationship, and how has it come about?

From Chartism to Labourism: "progressive" Bonapartism

The appearance of the class struggle in politics in the 1830s and 40s was a symptom of the crisis of bourgeois society — not its cause. Marx took "class" to be a historical and not a sociological category. The task of the proletariat, he wrote, was to abolish itself, not to realize itself.

Chartism and the revolutions of 1848 failed to lead to the "social republic." Instead, a new form of state arose over society, wielding welfare programs and police forces to manage the contradictions. This was clearly expressed in the election and then coup of Louis Bonaparte, with mass popular support from all sections of society. Under these conditions of Bonapartism, Marx recognized in a new way both the political independence of the working class from bourgeois liberals and radicals and the dictatorship of the proletariat as necessary political forms for overcoming the state and capitalism.

This insight was the foundation for the Social Democratic parties of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which sought, through the Second International, to build the independent working-class force for an international revolution.

Bonapartism has been the condition of capitalist politics ever since. It was exemplified in Britain by Palmerston and Gladstone's Liberal reform administrations and Disraeli's "One Nation" Conservatism. The politics of the representation of labor in Britain from the post-Chartist period onwards was a form of adaptation to the prevailing state capitalism, unlike the socialists' attempts to point beyond such conditions.

The organized trade union movement mostly sought parliamentary representation through the Liberal Party. This was embodied by A. J. Mundella, the first representative of labor elected to parliament in 1868, a year after the '67 reform act gave some working-class people the vote and the same year that the Trade Union Congress (TUC) was founded. Mundella had been a Chartist and poet, and at 15 heard his ballads sung in Chartist meetings. He went on to become a successful capitalist and partner in a large manufacturing firm. As the representative of labor, he was elected on the Liberal Party ticket and served in numerous administrations, helping to pass the trade union reforms of the early 1870s.

The politics of Bonapartism are captured well by a cartoon from 1871. The Liberal Gladstone stands on a copy of the "Manifesto of the Birmingham Liberals," while a worker, tools at the ready, points at the manifesto, demanding that Gladstone "stand and deliver!" The worker is demanding his bourgeois right to the value of his labor. But, as Marx said, "Between equal rights force decides."[11] A zombie-like policeman is coming down towards them, baton at the ready. Someone—it's not clear who—is going to get their head smashed in. In the background hang three gold balls, symbol of the pawnshop, indicating the lingering threat of unemployment that underpins this political dynamic.

The Labour Party that emerged in 1906 continued this Bonapartist politics of the Liberal representation of labor in the capitalist state, against attempts to establish a socialist party seeking to organise the working class independently to go beyond capitalism. As Theodore Rothstein wrote in *From Chartism to Labourism*:

> "After 1848 a new chapter is opened in the social history of England — not a chapter perhaps, but a whole volume — and this new volume has an entirely different content, and is permeated with quite a different spirit. If on the Continent of Europe the year 1848 marked the *appearance* of the proletariat upon the stage, henceforth fighting for its emancipation, in England it marked the moment of the *retreat* of the proletariat, henceforth tied body and soul to the triumphal chariot of the bourgeoisie, which it is dragging along to this day."[12]

Attempts to break the British working class away from Liberal labor representation to a mass socialist party failed. In the 1880s, three very different socialist groups emerged. Henry Hyndman founded the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) in 1881. A somewhat irreverent follower of Marx, he hoped to establish a mass socialist party on the model of the Second International. In 1884, economists Sidney and Beatrice Webb founded the Fabian Society, committed to Bonapartist welfare and social reform on the Bismarckian model. In 1889, Keir Hardie formed the Independent Labour Party (ILP), championing parliamentary representation of labor separate from the Liberals, at least formally. All three groups tried to gain working class support through the TUC. In the 1880s and 90s, the efforts of the SDF to push for an independent socialist class politics were repeatedly blocked by the trade unions, and their attempts to unify with the ILP failed.

The Liberal Party welcomed the new Labour representatives, whose votes supported the Liberal governments, and stood aside in many seats to let the Labour candidate win. Sometimes a clash would emerge between an independent labor candidate and the Liberal labor candidate. The Labour Representation Committee (LRC) was formed in 1900 to avoid this happening and ensure the greatest number of representatives of labor in Parliament. Again, the three socialist groups joined, but the efforts of the SDF to push for an independent class politics and socialist goal were rejected, and they walked out a year later.

In 1906, 29 LRC candidates were returned, a majority with the support of the Liberals, who, for example, stood aside for Keir Hardie to win his seat. Ramsay MacDonald, future Labour prime minister and theoretician of the ILP, was also elected that year. He summarized the group's politics succinctly: "The watchword of socialism is not class consciousness but community consciousness."[13] This "community consciousness" was a parallel to Disraeli's "one nation" Conservatism: Bonapartism.

The SDF continued unsuccessfully to try to build a British socialist party in the Second International, opposing the Labour Party and the Liberals. The commitment of the newly christened Labour Party to Liberal social reforms was embodied in the 1910 general elections. Lloyd George's "People's Budget" — was this echoed by McDonnell's "People's Chancellor"? — promised large social welfare reforms, but it was blocked by the House of Lords. A "People vs Parliament" election — as Boris Johnson has branded that of 2019 — was called to push through the reforms. The Liberals won with Labour's support.

A famous poster from this election is often used on the Left as an example of Labour's early radicalism. It shows men using battering rams to open the House of Lords. The caption reads, "Labour clears the way." Labour clears the way — for what? For Socialism? No. For the Liberal reforms, which were blocked by the House of Lords. It is literally Labour being used as a battering ram by the Liberals. This is a good example of the "progressive" capitalist politics that the Left has been supporting since the 1930s — if not the 1910s. It was exemplified in the U.S. by Teddy Roosevelt's "progressivism."[14]

The SDF cautioned its supporters against any illusions in the supposed "lesser evil" of the Liberal government supported by the Labour party. Dora Montefiore wrote in *Justice*:

> "[A]s far as our side was concerned the election has been fought absolutely and purely on Socialist teachings; the Budget has been attacked and riddled and ridiculed as far as the plea of its being a "poor man's Budget" is concerned. There has been no truckling to any "restricting the veto of the Lords"; but we have pointed again and again to our programme, which demands the "abolition of the House of Lords." Whilst detailing the few immediate palliatives which must be conceded in order to mitigate the terrible sufferings entailed by capitalism, we have spoken ever of Revolutionary Socialism as being the only hope of the workers; and they have responded with a cheer for Social Democracy."[15]

In 1911, some sections of the ILP, unhappy with the direction of the LRC in supporting the Liberals, broke away and joined the SDF, becoming the British Socialist Party (BSP).

Lenin and Labour

The international socialist movement came into crisis during WWI as the German socialists voted to support war credits. The Labour Party duly voted through the war budgets for the Liberal government.[16] The BSP also split, with Hyndman leading out a pro-war faction. The revolutionary opportunity posed by this crisis led to the Russian revolution and the formation of communist parties out of the remnants of former socialist parties. In Britain, the Communist Party was formed by the BSP and several smaller groups. Arguments immediately broke out within the CPGB as to how to orient towards the Labour Party — how to win the working class away from Labour.

This debate occasioned Lenin's famous speech on affiliation with the Labour Party in 1920, which has been much abused by Leftists today seeking justification for their activity in Labour. The Labour Party at the time was still a very loose organization to which other parties (such as the BSP) could affiliate and had. This was a unique situation, in which the CPGB could attempt to affiliate and publicly agitate against the Labour leadership.

Lenin criticized the view that Labour was the "political expression" of the working class:

> "The concept 'political expression' of the trade union movement, is erroneous. Of course, most of the Labour Party's members are workingmen. However, whether or not a party is really a political party of the workers does not depend solely upon a membership of workers but also upon the men that lead it, and the content of its actions and its political tactics. Only this latter determines whether we really have before us a political party of the proletariat. Regarded from this, the only correct, point of view, the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although made up of workers, it is led by reactionaries, and the worst kind of reactionaries at that, who act quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is an organisation of the bourgeoisie, which exists to systematically dupe the workers".[17]

Here Lenin is drawing on Marx's lessons of 1848: the necessity of political independence of the working class for socialism, as opposed to trade unionism and Bonapartist reforms within capitalism. Further, following Marx, Lenin assumes that it is the goal of socialism that constitutes the proletariat politically as such; otherwise, the working class is just another racket within capitalism. Similarly, when Eduard Bernstein, inspired by the British trade union movement, advanced his "revisionist" socialism in Germany, saying, "the movement is everything, the goal is nothing," Rosa Luxemburg upheld the Marxist view that,

> "[T]he final goal of socialism constitutes the only decisive factor distinguishing the Social-Democratic movement from bourgeois democracy and from bourgeois radicalism, the only factor transforming the entire labour movement from a vain effort to repair the capitalist order into a class struggle against this order, for the suppression of this order."[18]

Given the open nature of the Labour Party, Lenin called for the CPGB to affiliate but to maintain complete freedom of press and organization and to begin agitating against the Labour leadership. When Sylvia Pankhurst responded that Labour would immediately kick them out if they did so, Lenin responded that that would be excellent, as it would publicly demonstrate to the working class that the Labour party "is an organisation of the bourgeoisie, which exists to systematically dupe the workers." It was on that basis that affiliation with the Labour Party was called for — to support it like a rope supports a hanged man.

In the end, Labour did not accept CPGB affiliation, and when CPGB members joined individually, they were witch-hunted out over the 1920s.[19] The window of opportunity quickly closed as the German revolution failed, Lenin died and Stalinism began to take its hold on the Third International, and, at the same time, the Labour Party became the official opposition and then joint governing party with the Liberals, becoming a more tightly controlled organization and squeezing out the efforts of the early CPGB to lead the working class away from Labourism. In the absence of an independent Socialist or Communist party, in the absence of an International and in the absence of the working-class radicalism that followed WWI, quoting Lenin to justify working with Labour reversed the who/whom question Lenin posed. Rather than the Left using the Labour Party, the Labour Party has used the Left ever since.

The Stalinist CPGB, through all its various zigzags, accommodated to tacit support for Labour through its so-called "British road to socialism." The Trotskyists who split from the CPGB tried from the 30s to the 50s every different form of possible relationship to Labour, to try to win workers away from it or transform it in some way.[20] Meanwhile, Labour was growing into an establishment governing party of British capitalism, particularly through the experience of the national unity government in WWII.

The '45 Labour government was not a victory for socialism, but rather the state management of capitalism, as we have been tracing from the Bonapartism of the 1860s. The post-war order was not even really modelled on Keynesian and Fabian policy but on America's four freedoms, the Marshall plan and FDR's New Deal. The essential conservatism of the welfare state was revealed by the fact that it became the consensus for the Conservative party, too, which managed the welfare state throughout the 1950s.

When Labour lost the 1959 election, the party went into crisis, and the SPGB, a tiny split from the old SDF, observed: "When the pioneers of the Labour Party dreamed of placing themselves at the head of a grateful army of electors by enacting social reforms, they never thought of a possibility of a Tory Party that beat them at the same game."[21]

Young Socialists

This crisis for Labourism was expressed through so-called left-wing discontents within the party. A great battle took place at its 1960 Scarborough conference between the "Left" and "Right" of the party over Clause IV and nuclear disarmament. The Left won the battle but lost the war. At the same time, official Communism had come into a crisis of its own following the Soviet invasion of Hungary in '56 and Khrushchev's speech denouncing Stalin.

This simultaneous crisis of Stalinism and Labourism opened up possibilities for rethinking on the Left, giving rise in the UK to what we now call the New Left. *New Left Review* was launched in January 1960 as a direct response to Labour's defeat, featuring Ralph Miliband's article "The Sickness of Labourism."[22] It is significant that Miliband opened the essay with a quote from Disraeli in conversation with Henry Hyndman. When Hyndman visited him to ask for advice on how to start a mass Socialist party, Disraeli responded, "It is a very difficult country to move, Mr. Hyndman, very difficult indeed." Miliband's "Sickness of Labourism" invoked the difficult problem of beginning an independent socialist party. But perhaps the deep history he invoked was illegible to his readers.

The Trotskyists of *Labour Review* tried to engage in the new intellectual climate for rethinking Marxism. Their 1960 issue on the famous Scarborough conference features Cliff Slaughter's valuable essay "What is Revolutionary Leadership?" Early issues also had interesting debates between Slaughter and Alasdair MacIntyre (later of the IS) over the question of the "New Left." The period from Labour's defeat in 1959 to its election victory in 1964 was one of the most vibrant and thoughtful on the British Left since the 1920s. Was there a possibility for overcoming the "symbiotic" relationship between Left and Right within Labour? Was there a chance to "transform" Labour? What would that have meant? Was there the possibility for breaking from Labourism and founding a new independent socialist politics?

The Labour Party itself was worried after so many defeats. It needed to attract some of the youthful energy it could see protesting for the Campaign for Nuclear

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"Labour once more", cont. from page 3

Disarmament (CND) at its conference. It needed to use the symbiotic relationship between Left and Right to perpetuate itself. It decided to set up a youth organization called Young Socialists (YS).

YS grew rapidly with support from young people who had only ever known Conservative rule and found the welfare state to be conformist and restrictive and who opposed nuclear weapons and American foreign policy. The different Trotskyist groups all entered, too, and tried to build their organizations by gaining influence in the Labour Party through YS.[23] More broadly, YS tried to "transform" Labour. There was a vibrant social scene, and the YS papers ran column after column on the radical culture of the swinging 60s (this was mocked at the time as "sex, syncopation and socialism"). They demanded that Labour endorse unilateral disarmament and withdrawal from NATO. As *Young Guard*, the minority paper in YS, wrote in 1963:

> "It is vital that the voice of socialism is heard at this conference. We must demand full discussion of the important issues of wages and nationalisation and press home the socialist answers in the interests of Labour and of the working masses who are now looking to Labour for a lead."[24]

Through the early 60s, this put a growing YS, with hundreds of national branches, at odds with the Labour leadership, compounding a "Left/Right" dynamic in the party.

When Labour ran in the 1964 election under Harold Wilson, it was seen as the chance of a lifetime for these "young socialists." Wilson and his ally Barbara Castle both came from the Bevanite Left wing of the Labour party, which had opposed the party's rightward shift in the 50s under Gaitskell. The Tories had been in power for 13 years and were engulfed in scandals following the Suez war. A young Tony Benn, fresh from a career at the BBC, led Labour's new-fangled television campaign with all the latest media-savvy ideas. Wilson spoke about how Labour was going to harness the new technological revolution.

For most YS members, as the election approached, it began to matter less and less that Labour was not going to endorse nuclear disarmament, nor withdraw from NATO or complete the set of nationalizations or the wages policy they had wanted. Rather, they were drawn into the idea that getting rid of the Tories would be the best chance in their lifetimes to vaguely advance socialism. "After the election," they thought, "we will push on from there. The working classes," who, as *Young Guard* had put it, were looking to Labour for a lead, "would probably become emboldened and demand more." These and other illusions helped them to wholeheartedly endorse Harold Wilson's Labour Party in 1964 and celebrate its victory. The small window of opportunity for rethinking the necessity of socialism, the problem of working-class political independence, the tradition of Marxism and the relation of the Left to the Labour party had closed on this New Left.

While most Young Socialists went along with the course of the Wilson Government, a minority voiced dissent. What is more colloquially considered the New Left is what came after '64: the young socialists who were discontented with the realities of the Labour government. But despite the organizations they set up outside Labour in the 70s (a long story I can't get into here), they all still tacitly supported Labour as Thatcher's revolution rocked their world, and as mature adults they probably voted for Tony Blair, who promised the same relief from years of Tory government to another generation.

This dynamic was a consistent feature of the talks at a panel on "50 Years of 1968"[25] at the Platypus European conference in London in February 2018. Nearly all of the panelists spoke about disappointment with the Labour government of the mid 60s in the attempt to push them towards Left-wing politics. Judith Shapiro, a one-time member of the Sparticist League, recalled with horror, word for word, the news statement that Labour was giving tacit support to the U.S. troops in Vietnam. Despite her revolutionary Trotskyism, her real leftism manifested itself as disappointment with Labour: feeling betrayed. Benn comes to seem like disgruntled Wilsonites, and Wilson, disgruntled Bevanites. The Left goes on prosecuting the "symbiotic relationship" within Labour eternally.

The neoliberal Left

> "The British general election of 1997 brought an ignominious end to eighteen years of Conservative rule. In its hour of victory, New Labour should recall how exacting modern electorates are prone to be. Despite its extraordinary caution, New Labour still managed to promise the beginnings of a badly needed democratic overhaul of the UK state, to claim that it stood 'for the many not the few', and to convey the impression that education and health would flourish under its stewardship. Robin Blackburn argues that the half-measures promised by the new government are likely to whet the appetite for democratic reform and that, in economic and social policy, Labour will be driven either to disappoint its electorate or to invent new ways of mobilizing and directing the economy. He concludes that only a bold European 'New Deal,' and a willingness to work against the grain of economic 'globalization', can now overcome the great damage and division bequeathed by Conservative rule."[26]

The quotation above is from the editorial intro to *New Left Review* after Blair's victory in 1997. Sound familiar? It could have been written by the Left today.

Much of Corbynism can be chalked up to disgruntled Blairites. Blair had been their savior from the Tories and then betrayed them with the Iraq War. Corbyn, as then-chair of the Stop the War Coalition, represented the redemption of this sin by Labour, so that it could come to terms with itself, and all those activists who left in 2003 could come back. Corbyn is not really the "Old Labour" social democrat that Tony Benn was (and Benn himself was no Bevan). Unlike Benn, who was formed in the 50s and 60s, Corbyn is really a political product of the 80s and 90s, the neoliberal era, albeit through opposition.

So much of Corbyn's sensibility about politics is reminiscent of Blair — even to the point of literally repeating Blair's slogan, "For the many, not the few." Corbyn has back-pedalled on his former opposition to nuclear weapons and NATO, betraying his so-called Left-wing foreign policy. He has replaced it in the 2019 election manifesto with the promise to launch an "inquiry" into the legacies of British colonialism. Such gestural politics were familiar to Blair, who "recognized" Britain's role in the Irish potato famine and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Corbyn's move is a sop to his Millennial base, who have been brought up on such neoliberal gestural politics and plays to the PC identity politics they've learned at university. Such policies will play well with Corbynistas, but they will not attract back Labour's former working-class voters, who do not have time for middle-class guilt and symbolism.

Corbyn's most spectacular capitulation to the Blairites, whom he was supposed to defeat, was conceding to their demand for a second referendum on Brexit. This will not go down well in Labour's so-called working-class heartlands either. The Left's attempts to explain away working-class Tory voters with charges of racism or media bias recall the Democrats' hysterical condemnation of Trump voters as "deplorables" and invocation of conspiratorial Russian meddling. Such explanations signal intellectual exhaustion and the end of the road.

Whether Corbyn loses this election to Boris Johnson, as most predict, or is able to muster a minority government with support from the Scottish National Party (SNP), it is clear that the Left will try to avoid its history in relation to the Labour party, and even more so the history of Marxism, in order to go on voting Labour, with or without misgivings. Elections have a weird generational impact, leaving people blinded to thinking critically about how capitalism is changing. We need to work against that tendency, to take a longer view and think critically.**| P**

1 Audio recording: https://archive.org/details/Labour-Left-Platypus.
2 Ephraim Carlebach, "'Last illusions': The Labour Party and the Left," *Platypus Review* 97 (June 2017), available online at: <https://platypus1917.org/2017/06/05/last-illusions-labour-party-left/>. First published as Ephraim Nashe, "Labour and the Left," *Weekly Worker* 1146 (March 16, 2017), available online at: <https://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1146/labour-and-the-left/>.
3 See Chris Cutrone, "The Millennial Left is Dead," *Platypus Review* 100 (October 2017), available online at: <https://platypus1917.org/2017/10/01/millennial-left-dead/>.
4 Rob Sewell, "Don't believe the polls or pessimists — we can win!" *Socialist Appeal* (November 22, 2019), available online at: <https://www.socialist.net/don-t-believe-the-polls-or-pessimists-we-can-win.htm>.
5 Hillel Ticktin, "Confused Reformism," *Weekly Worker* 1132 (November 24, 2016), available online at: < https://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1132/confused-reformism/>.
6 Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism* (Zero Books 2009), p.78. See my article "Forgetting Mark Fisher," *Platypus Review* 115 (April 2019), available online at: <https://platypus1917.org/2019/04/01/forgetting-mark-fisher/>.
7 "Kinnock, Benn: No Choice," *Workers Hammer* 98 (May–June 1988), available online at: <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/workershammer-uk/098_1988_05-06_workers-hammer.pdf>.
8 From Fisher's talk "All of this is temporary" at the CCI Collective.
9 "Class War in the Labour Party," Workers Hammer 233 (Winter 2015–16), available online at: <https://www.icl-fi.org/english/wh/233/Labour.html>. Ultimately, they abandoned support for Corbyn after he revealed himself to be an "EU running dog."
10 Kinnock.
11 Karl Marx, *Capital*, volume 1, Chapter Ten: The Working-Day.
12 Theodore Rothstein, *From Chartism to Labourism*, Appendix: "1848 in England."
13 Ramsay MacDonald, *Socialism and Society* (1905).
14 See Chris Cutrone, "The end of the Gilded Age: Discontents of the Second Industrial Revolution today," *Platypus Review* 102 (December 2017–January 2018), available online at: < https://platypus1917.org/2017/12/02/end-gilded-age-discontents-second-industrial-revolution-today/>.
15 Dora Montefiore, "On Burnley," *Justice*, January 22, 1910.
16 However, this was opposed on pacifist grounds by MacDonald.
17 Lenin, "Speech On Affiliation To The British Labour Party," August 6, 1920, Second Congress of the Communist International.
18 Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution* (1900).
19 See my interview with Lawrence Parker, "'Those Twenties': An interview with Lawrence Parker on the National Left-Wing Movement," *Platypus Review* 111 (November 2018), available online at: <https://platypus1917.org/2018/11/02/those-twenties-an-interview-with-lawrence-parker-on-the-national-left-wing-movement/>.
20 See Mike MacNair, "In, out, shake it all about," *Weekly Worker* 839 (February 27,2010), available online at: <https://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/839/in-out-shake-it-all-about/>.
21 "Future of the Labour Party," *Socialist Standard* (December 1959).
22 See Michael Fitzpatrick, "The fatal embrace of the Left and the Labour Party: Ralph Miliband's changing positions on Labour," *Platypus Review* 97 (June 2017), available online at: <https://platypus1917.org/2017/06/05/fatal-embrace-left-labour-party-ralph-milibands-changing-positions-labour/>.
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24 "We must fight against wage restraint," *Young Guard* (October, 1963).
25 Robert Borba, Judith Shapiro, Jack Conrad, and Hillel Ticktin, "50 years of 1968", *Platypus Review* 105 (April 2018), available online at: <https://platypus1917.org/2018/04/01/50-years-of-1968/>.
26 Editorial, *New Left Review* I, 223 (May/June 1997).

"New Deal and ...", cont. from page 2

manage the cuts of capital 'democratically'.

In this way, at best, the *Jacobin* utopia falls back to the origins of progressive liberalism itself, when Ira Steward, the leading labor-reformer, defined the political end and aim of the labor movement as the federal legislation of the eight-hour day — at worst, it would fall back on the anti-capitalist sentiment of Bryanism. In good progressive liberal fashion, both Steward and Sunkara see the state as a positive force of democratic will in society: for Steward, the federal government could enforce, or perhaps at least set an example for, the eight-hour day, all within a basic framework of Greenback utilitarianism; for Sunkara, the federal government can print jobs like money. The distance between Steward and Sunkara is the authoritarian state-capitalism of the 20th century itself, which is why Bernie and Sunkara can imagine a state-led transformation of American society only on the model of a 1940-style state of emergency.[10]

The self-consciousness of the end is the consciousness of the means: where *Jacobin* puts socialism as the end and the Democratic Party as the means, 'socialism' becomes a means to the next round of Democratic Party austerity-management, which Trump is already rendering irrelevant. It is not coincidental that Hillary Clinton found the 'federal job guarantee' to be the most profound and intriguing idea for the role of the federal government in answering the question of incentivizing productive jobs. If Sunkara wishes for the working class to claim their means of production as their right, then the goal he sets at the beginning should not budge one inch to the limited horizon of capitalist mismanagement: that, however, would mean opening our imagination back up to the 19th century and the task of the bourgeois revolution that national industrialization posed for the global laboring subject.

The imperialist world war (WWI) posed the question of the political agency of the working-class toward the global universalization of labor and socialization of capital. With bourgeois society hanging in ruins, two peaces were proposed: that of Vladimir Lenin and of Woodrow Wilson. For Marx, Lenin and Luxemburg, wresting political control from the illiberal mismanagers of industrial capital was the key step in overcoming the self-contradiction of the bourgeois revolution in industrial capitalism. To do this, they had to smash the bourgeois form of state that pretended to hold industry together through trenches of dead workers, for industrial capital had itself already gone beyond the parliamentary apparatus. Would the SPD facilitate the international workers' revolution by smashing the illiberal bourgeois state, or would it hand power back over to the leaders of the military-industrial complex in order to constitute a bourgeois state in the name of liberalism? That was the question. The American and the Russian revolutions are one revolution mediated by the failure of the German revolution: that failure is the failure of industrialism itself.

The Wilsonian nation-state basis of the League of Nations results from the failure of the working-class movement. It flattens the contradiction of capital and labor into the national-communal identity of a welfare-state. However, internally redistributive policies still express, despite their national Bonapartist form, essentially the international character of labor and capital, and therefore Bonapartism is essentially one international state in national sections. Global labor must become adequate to international Bonapartism. The origin of the 'nation' in the bourgeois revolutions was simply the association of producers against the internationalism of the church and aristocracy and was in this way already pointing to global cosmopolitan society: in the nineteenth century liberalism identified the nation with industrial productivity. The political form of the dictatorship of the proletariat will still be nationally-democratic in character. So the question is, is the horizon of the Left the Lassallean-Bismarckian redistributive imperialist welfare-state, or the adequacy of global labor to global capital? This question of means and ends should be posed as the next wave of liberal progressivism and its leftist tails falls away. It would mean the Left's orientation from the 19th not the 20th century and the postulation of the Left as the unredeemed task of History.**| P**

1 Victor Navasky, "The Left Wing of the Possible," *New York Times,* May 28, 2000. <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/00/05/28/reviews/000528.28navaskt.html/>
2 See *PR 117* on the break-up of the SDS <https://platypus1917.org/category/pr/issue-117/>
3 Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*
4 Alex Gourevitch, *From Slavery to Cooperative Commonwealth*
5 Gourevtich, *From Slavery to Cooperative Commonweatlth*
6 This argument is made by Eugene Debs in his 1900 essay, "Competition versus Cooperation."
7 Sunkara, Lessons from the First Red Century (https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/12/russian-revolution-bolsheviks-social-democracy)
8 Zamora, Case Against UBI (https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/12/universal-basic-income-inequality-work) and Paul, Darity, Hamilton, Why We Need a Federal Job Guarantee (https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/02/federal-job-guarantee-universal-basic-income-investment-jobs-unemployment/)
9 Sunkara, World After Capitalism (https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/01/15/socialism-post-capitalist-world/)
10 For example, on Bernie's campaign website, his campaign writes, "Directly invest an historic $16.3 trillion public investment toward [the Green New Deal], in line with the mobilization of resources made during the New Deal and WWII, but with an explicit choice to include black, indigenous and other minority communities who were systematically excluded in the past." <https://berniesanders.com/issues/green-new-deal/>

Brexit is the least problem for Labour and the European Left

Victor Cova

THE RECENT AND PREDICTABLE CONSERVATIVE VICTORY in the UK General Elections has produced much outrage and wringing of hands on the European Left and abroad. They had hailed Corbyn as the promise of a return to working class politics, a chance to redeem the Labour Party from its recent Blairite past, and the man who would finally give a voice to the people. But the people decided to give its voice to a different man, and suddenly the working class is idiotic, racist, fascistic even. Because of them, a new Dark Age will fall upon Britain as it is sold for scraps to Boris's evil twin Donald. The same leftists who felt it was urgent to vote for Corbyn in order to save the suffering working class of Corbyn's campaign videos now calls a plague upon their houses and starts doubting the very value of democracy. Some voices call for a radical self-critique of Corbynism, while others think that now is the time for mourning and not for intellectualization.

It would be easier to sympathize with them if they did not disguise their self-interest behind a facade of sympathy for the poor. The people who most vehemently supported and voted for Corbyn, middle-class managers, professionals, academics and students, have all been hard hit by the past ten years. Their working conditions have worsened, whereas their salaries have barely increased and the cost of life has exploded. Their sudden sympathy for the working class probably came from a sense of increasing proletarianization. Whatever their good intentions and gestures of solidarity, they were not reciprocated. Many lifelong Labour voters, especially in the mining towns that were once a Labour stronghold, have cast their votes for the Conservative party. This should interrogate them. Instead, they retreat into the bad excuse that Social Democrats have peddled for the past few years: it's the fault of the media, neoliberalism, individualism, the Russians, the end of truth, and this weird beast — populism.

If they had paid attention to the profound transformations in the economy since 2008, and even more so since 2016, to the actions of these supposed mindless fascist monsters, Trump and Boris Johnson, and to the words of the few intellectuals that stand behind them, they would have noticed that there is less to fear for Britain than they imagined — and much more for their cherished parties and ideologies. First, those who wanted a soft Brexit and increased public investment should rejoice: This is precisely what BoJo will be able to do now that he has a strong majority, and something to which Corbyn could never have aspired. Many suspect the Conservatives do not really want to invest in infrastructure — perhaps, but they would be able to if they wanted. As Corbyn spent the past few years struggling to manage his own party, one fails to see how he could have achieved ambitious reforms with a hung parliament trying to renegotiate Brexit while still having to obey the EU's strict budgetary restrictions. The economy will also probably experience a little boom that may very well offset the negative effects of the implementation of Brexit — again, it's doubtful Corbyn could have inspired such confidence.

What's more, we might even see policies of re-industrialization. A former Bank of England economist recently wrote an article for the Trumpist *American Affairs* journal, arguing that the Tories should use Brexit to implement importation substitution measures.[1] It is difficult not to see a parallel with the defeat of the left-wing coalitions which had promised a Green New Deal and a New Green Deal in the last EU elections, only to see a Christian Democrat EU President announce that she will carry it out. The Right is on the way to realizing what the Left had been promising.

Left-wing intellectuals in the UK and beyond believe that they are still living in neoliberalism. Their horror at Trump and Johnson has less to do with the return of fascism than with their bewilderment at the strange new world in which they find themselves. All they seem able to do is close their eyes, complain about the end of the world, and vilify their political adversaries and their voters. Their increasing hysteria is stopping them from assessing the situation and taking stock of their irrelevance. Far from a wake-up call, the defeat of Corbyn seems doomed to further accentuate the divisions within the European Left between Europhiles and Europhobes. The Left will not learn from this defeat, and it would not have learned from an unlikely victory. Among other things, this is only the last of a series of failed efforts by socialists to use the Labour Party, and it predictably ended like these previous attempts[2] — some within Momentum will join the ranks of Labour centrists, while most of the surge of Labour members will abandon politics forever, feeling embittered and betrayed. The Left's inability to learn is not new — Marx was criticizing it after the failure of the 1848 revolution and his work can be seen as an attempt to help the Left learn from its failures. To no avail? **| P**

1 Jerome Douglas, "Rebuilding British Industry: A Plan for the Post-Brexit Economy," *American Affairs* v. 3 n. 4 (Winter 2019). <https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2019/11/rebuilding-british-industry-a-plan-for-the-post-brexit-economy/>
2 Efraim Carlebach, "'Last illusions': The Labour Party and the Left," *PR 97.* <https://platypus1917.org/2017/06/05/last-illusions-labour-party-left/>

The New Deal and progressive liberalism

Clint Montgomery

A CENTRAL PLANK OF BERNIE SANDERS' CURRENT BID for the nomination of the Democratic Party and of Jeremy Corbyn's bid for Prime Minister before it collapsed is the Green New Deal.

The proposals of Bernie's Green New Deal are certainly possible — even if Bernie's ability as president to form the political coalition necessary to implement them appear less plausible. The idea is: take leadership of the Democratic Party to gain access to state-power, then use Keynesian economic tools to transition to a carbon net-zero economy and gain the support of the working class through public investment and job creation. This is certainly possible within capitalism, and the Green New Deal has already been taken up by the Right in Europe with Ursula von der Leyen and Macron. Often, just as with Lassalle and Bismarck, what the Left proposes the Right pushes through: therefore, we need a better Left if we want a better Right.

Even if Europe does go carbon-neutral by 2050 it is worth recognizing that at present Europe is responsible for 5% of total carbon emissions — this is down from 99% in 1850. This is why the Chinese Communist Party is also taking significant steps to reduce their carbon-footprint. The damage of industrialization is already done — nothing will reverse the environmental effects that have already accumulated — and once again, the global reduction of carbon-emissions is certainly possible within capitalism. So, the issue at stake is not state-policies to reduce the carbon-footprint, much less the historical dialectic of man and nature. Rather the issue is the state as a function of politics, and politics as a function of the state, because these state-led projects to globally reduce carbon emissions will take place within a fundamental horizon of the need to increase the productivity of national capital vis-a-vis global trade and to manage surplus populations of global labor. Where these come together is the state as the democratic manager of discontents. These discontents are expressed through organized political parties vying to use state-power in order to satisfy, through more or less liberal means, enough of the electorate to maintain social order and therefore to retain their position in state-power. This is Marx's concept of Bonapartism.

There are two distinct conceptions of the relation between society and the state as a function of politics. The first is the liberal-progressive view, the second is the Marxist view.

In the liberal-progressive view, the state is a positive force to be used by democratic society in order to address problems that emerge in society. For Marx, however, the state emerges from society in order to manage a contradiction in society that society itself can no longer manage: he called this contradiction industry. Marx saw in the 19th century how the state took on an executive character far above the self-contradiction of society through industry in order, not to overcome that contradiction, but to manage its effects. In the Marxist view, then, the state is not a positive force for democratic good but the negative expression of bourgeois society's industrial self-contradiction. The state is a negative index of the inability of bourgeois exchange society to regulate itself: this is because the value of labor as a measure of social wealth had been rendered historically obsolete with respect to the industrial forces of production it released. The state would then manage this contradiction on the backend and thereby become increasingly powerful and independent: prisons and welfare are the same state-mechanism for managing surplus labor populations.

But for Marx, if bourgeois society overcame its industrial self-contradiction, then the need for a state would wither away. In this way, Marx stands in firm continuity with the deeper roots of liberalism. His difference with progressive liberalism was in the way they saw the social question being posed through the state under conditions of industrialization: for progressive liberals, the state would reconcile society's various antagonisms; for Marx, the state is an index of the inability to reconcile them and therefore an index of the continued need to overcome the industrial commodification of labor-power. Of course, this could be possible only through the social-political self-education of the working-class through its party into a self-conscious social-political force.

20th century progressive capitalism

There are two phases of progressive liberalism in the United States. The first is the post-Civil War populist progressivism that gives rise to Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson and which has a second wave in the 1930s with Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal Coalition. This coalition would oversee the architecture of the post-war order, ushering in the second phase. However, as a function of changes in global capital and as a result of the New Left in the 1960s, this New Deal coalition collapses and the new 'popular' reorientation is toward identity-based issues that get reified into voting-rackets. The 1972 McGovern coalition, where the Clintons begin their political career, signals this political transition. The two sides of these voting-rackets, organized labor coming out of the New Deal and the horse-trade of the Dixiecrat South for progressive identitarian issues (blacks, women, and minorities), are the Democratic Party of the last 40 years of neoliberalism. This "progressive" aspect of the Democratic Party had a second wave in the 2016 election around Bernie Sanders, whose political origins lie in the "radicalism" of the 60s.

To understand both these phases we have to understand their pivot point in the 1930s New Deal Coalition. The New Deal emerges from the nineteenth century and the 'second phase' is only a playing out of this moment. The difference between the two phases, pre and post New Deal, is that in the first progressive liberalism is refracted through the Left, and in the second phase the Left is dead.

We can briefly recount the second phase of McGovern to Bernie by reference to this pivot point of the New Deal Coalition that is its origin.

In the decades leading up to the New Deal, there was a radical mass of organized and unorganized industrial labor for whose political leadership the communists, socialists, and liberals vied. The communists and the socialists pursued the political independence of the working-class, while the liberals pursued the integration of the industrial working-class through promising jobs and consumptive opportunity. The two sides can be posed like this: a revolutionary integrationism of the industrial working-class into the productive mechanism of bourgeois society, or a civil or 'progressive liberal' integration. Revolutionary integrationism is possible only through the political self-consciousness of the industrial working-class taking responsibility for capital itself, since the bourgeoisie had long since forfeited its claim to this title. This the industrial working-class would do by means of its party which was to dialectically coordinate the social and political aspects of class-struggle toward the ultimate seizure of state-power with the aim of rendering the party and the party-system and ultimately the state itself irrelevant. The party, the party-system and the state would wither away because the working-class had mastered the industrial self-contradiction at their heart. The political self-consciousness of this task was the historical self-consciousness of the proletariat and therefore the question of the industrial working class's political leadership. In this sense, revolutionary integrationism in productive society is not an integration into that society but the intrinsic self-overcoming of that society by means of its own industrial tools.

In 1935, the Communist Party, with orders from Moscow, dropped its tactic of a united front and replaced it with a popular front. Although a fascist threat was not prominent in the U.S., this meant basically dropping the task of the independent political self-consciousness of the working-class in favor of supporting the progressive liberals of FDR's New Deal coalition. To this day, in the office of the Communist Party of America in San Francisco hangs a picture of Barack Obama.

Of course, it was not only the literal Stalinists that proposed entering the Democratic Party in order to change it: this became the strategy of many Trotskyists as well. The Trotskyist Max Shachtman split with Trotsky over the question of whether the Soviet Union was still a living workers' revolution that degenerated into a bureaucratic state, arguing that rather its state-capitalist character had rendered it no different from fascism and therefore not a route for the possibility of global revolution. As a consequence of his assessment, he became involved in an attempt in the 1960s to enter and realign the Democratic Party that involved other prominent socialists like Bayard Rustin. The idea was to use the crisis of the Democratic Party around the Civil Rights movement to strip away the organized labor-base away from the plutocratic elements of the Democratic Party. This meant that Shachtman and Rustin were explicitly *not* trying to transform the Democratic Party from within. Rather, they were trying to exploit the crisis of the two capitalist parties in order to redirect industrial labor away from the Democrats and align it with the radical elements of the Civil Rights movement in order to create the conditions for a socialist party.

This attempt fails along with the rest of the New Left, and the student of this attempt, Michael Harrington, consolidates that failure in 1983 by founding the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). When Harrington founds the DSA his goal (in contradistinction to that of Shachtman) is explicitly *not* to form a socialist party independent of capitalist politics but to transform the Democratic Party from within. As a result of this strategy, the stated task of 'socialism' goes from an independent socialist party to the DSA as the "left wing of the possible within the Democratic Party."[1] As early as 1984 and 1985 they support Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition and vie to be the most adamant racketeers of the progressive liberal wing of the Democratic Party — namely, identity politics plus welfare-state austerity. The DSA-bump around Sanders and Trump is thus the final ghost of the 1980s: all the Marxist organizations, Maoist and Trotskyist, attempting to use the DSA and direct it toward ostensibly revolutionary aims themselves in turn liquidate their ostensible socialism into its progressive liberalism and thereby into the Democrats. The DSA is merely the way-station, the drain around which SAlt, ISO, Solidarity — the Trotskyists — and the FRSO, the RCP, and others — the Maoists — all circle before finally liquidating into progressive liberalism, but this time without leaving much of an historical memory.

The argument one hears today — or at least heard — was that the Democratic Party is a big tent of competing interests — but this is simply the 1980s speaking, without any consciousness of the prior history of American socialism. The capitulation of the 1960s New Left to the Democratic Party repeats itself through the weak glow of the 1980s generation, as the 60ers biologically pass. The split in the original Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in 1968 between the Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM) and the Workers-Student Alliance (PL/WSA) over whether class or race is more fundamental in the political self-education of the working-class degenerates into mere technical racketeering over which electoral groups can be tactically convinced to vote for the local progressive.[2] Race *and* class, Jacobin says, but this just means the two aspects of Democratic Party liberal progressivism: identity politics and welfare-state austerity.

In any case, the DSA shows no immediate promise of surviving beyond Bernie's candidacy. If the Party succeeds in booting Bernie from the ticket, there will be a debate in the organization over whether to endorse the nominee, say Biden or Warren, and whatever the organization officially does, the members will support the nominee against Trump, for the only political unity of the organization is anti-Trumpism, they being simply the louder wing of the Democratic Party. In any case, woke progressivism is already being mobilized again against Bernie, and if it succeeds in discrediting the most perfectly progressive candidate, then woke progressivism will have rendered itself obsolete as a political criterion. Indeed, the central moment of Bernie's 2016 campaign was his switch from appealing to independent voters to trying to win over Hillary's woke progressive base, who are now dead set on eating him alive.

Progressive liberalism and American socialism

Having discussed the evolution of 20th century progressive liberalism up to the present day, we can turn to its origins in the 19th century. We will reach back before the origins of "progressive liberalism" and start at the beginning.

The Founding Fathers brought to self-conscious political expression the revolution in human social relations that first rendered the drudgery of 10,000 years of human servitude and defilement, the tyranny of nature, an object of the past: the bourgeois revolution. By demanding government of the people, by the people, for the people, the Fathers made bourgeois society, the society that bases itself on the trade of labor and its products, the self-conscious union of free-labor itself. The American Revolution, like the French Revolution, was the political expression of the bourgeois revolution, the revolt of the third estate, the beginning of truly human history.

The Founding Fathers had good reason to expect that the natural self-expansion of free-labor would render the value of slave-labor irrelevant and therefore they tipped the scales of history in the direction of freedom with the 3/5 Compromise, which legalized humanity in black men. What contradicted this bet on freedom was something they could not foresee: the introduction of the machine. Paradoxically, the introduction of the spinning jenny in England made slave-labor in Mississippi more valuable; and by the same token, it made the value of free-labor in Massachusetts less valuable, indeed increasingly worthless. This paradox constitutes the essence of Marx's assumption of the mantel of Adam Smith: it is a contradiction that is inherent to the exchange of free-labor itself, and it was not always there, rather it emerged when the tools of that exchange, the means, machines and methods of productions, outstripped their masters and reduced them to the role of cogs in its own self-production. This reversal of means and ends, where man becomes means of the machine, and the machine the ends of man, is the contradiction that Marx calls Capital. Where for Smith, capital was a means to the self-expansion of the productive division of free-labor, for Marx, free-labor has become the means to the self-production of capital.

In 1782, Thomas Jefferson, envisioning a republic of free and independent land-owners, looked at the growth of manufacturing in the cities and the increasing division between owners of machines and propertyless slum masses and quipped, "let our workshops remain in Europe."[3] But in 1782, there was only one spinning jenny in use in the world. By 1816, there were eighty-seven large-scale spinning jennies in operation. Jefferson was compelled to exclaim: "within the thirty years which have since elapsed, how are circumstances changed! — experience has taught me that manufactures are now as necessary to our independence as to our comfort."[4] A modern industrial proletariat was developing on the American continent and not just as an extraneous factor but as central to social-economic organization of free-labor in the North.

Agrarianism aside, there are two major reform movements in America of the nineteenth century up leading to the second American Revolution in the Civil War: first, the movement to abolish slavery in the South; and second, the beginnings of the formulation of a sort of 'wage-slavery' in the North. By 1829, you already have the self-conscious theorization of a form of social bondage that goes beyond the free and equal wage-contract, one which legal self-ownership does not and cannot address. This new social dependence emerging from the industrial wage-contract is described in literally the same terms that Marx will use later, when the industrial self-contradiction of bourgeois right had grown more acute, the doubly-free wage-laborer. Here is Thomas Skidmore: "Necessity compels us to work for such prices as are offered, and pay such prices as are demanded for every thing we need; we must either do this — resort to fraud or theft — or perish by hunger and nakedness."[5]

While both these movements supported the immediate abolition of slavery, tensions had already begun to emerge between the two senses of the task of the social emancipation of labor. The abolitionists driven by bourgeois right saw the stain of slavery as a force that was not going away of its own accord and must be removed through a conscious political act. This is the birth of the Republican Party. Lincoln brings both the abolitionists and the labor-reformers within the same tent of the Republican Party and successfully prosecutes the war. With slavery abolished, the submerged tensions flared out into the open. The American bourgeoisie continued to play a revolutionary role through the Civil War — completing the American Revolution. After the war, they stuttered on their limits for they were the limits of bourgeois society, the social-political manifestation of which Marx had diagnosed in more acute form across the ocean in Europe. The Republican Party becomes the party of big-capital, supporting the expansive industrial needs of the productive nation; the Democratic Party remains the organ of the southern states and the party of petit-bourgeois middle-class discontent in the North.

The social-political manifestation of the industrial contradiction was a rich cauldron pot of international proportions: this comes to highest political self-expression first in the First International and then, more self-consciously in the Second. However, just as in the other industrializing countries of the First International, the social and political aspects of this manifestation did not come together. The trade-union activity was widespread and militant: often the trade-unions were organized within a particular labor-sector to protect the agreed upon wage-rule; sometimes, they even took over management functions by advising how best to economize labor and other productive resources. Further, labor associations like the Knights of Labor organized workers across America with the aim of converting the factories into sites of common enterprise. The first nationwide railroad strike is in 1877, when union troops are removed from protecting democracy in the South to put down strikes in the North.

However, the question was what the actual aims of this social-economic struggle of labor pursued. This answer was supplied politically by the labor-reformers, who at a level lower than their radical-labor forebearers, argued that the massive federal state expanded through Lincoln should legislate a common eight-hour day; by 1870, this political demand was reduced to the federal state's providing merely an example to the rest of industry by implementing it for its own employees. That, or labor-reformers trying to give common political shape to the social-economic struggles simply took up Greenbackism, or manipulating the money-supply and tariff-ordinance to better encourage the profitability of wages.

Both of these aspects, the social-economic struggle and a political task to give this struggle shape, were theorized by Marx historically, i.e. in terms of the emergent industrial self-contradiction of formally equal bourgeois right. This struggle had reached a more acute, advanced form in what would become the social democratic parties of Europe. The basis of the social-democratic party, according to Marx's critique, was the historical task of the proletariat to overcome itself, the self-contradiction of industrial wage-labor. The party was an instrument of leadership of the working-class for learning and giving ultimate shape to the labor-struggle itself by pointing to the necessity for political revolution in order to enable the global-historical function of industrial wage-labor. Otherwise, the trade-unions and the nation-states would become mere labor-rackets.

In the United States, the Socialist Party is founded in 1901, after the agrarian-populist and labor-reform movements had come to naught in the progressive liberalism of the Democratic Party umbrella. In his founding speech in Chicago, Eugene Debs specifies imperialism as the contradiction whose task was adequate to the global industrial proletariat in its national section of the North American republic. The Republican Party, being the party of big capital encouraged the exercise of economic and soft imperialism as conducive to its productive needs; the Democratic Party, being the party of the unwilling middle class, decried imperialism. In short, while both parties were aiming to avoid stagnation, the interests of the republican party were large enough to need to seek foreign markets, but the interests of the Democratic party, being easily swallowed by larger interests, would have welcomed this stagnation as a possible opening for petit-bourgeois pursuits.

Against both of these, the task of the Socialist Party of America was to turn imperialism into a dialectical object: the integration of financial and industrial capital is progressive and the task adequate to the global working-class, do not break up the monopolies but set them in the service of society, not the redistribution of the cuts of capital but the appropriation of the private means of industrial production by the proletariat and its setting formerly national capital in the service of global-labor in its task to complete the bourgeois revolution through overcoming the industrial self-contradiction whose subject it was.

Opposed to American socialism was progressive liberalism, who in the name of liberalism sought to implement a program less progressive than capital itself. It was capital that integrated global work-forces, not the progressive liberals pretending to represent their nation-state. The progressivism of the liberals was a certain way of taming the industrial-financial force of self-monopolizing capital by mitigating its worst effects and directing its investorial thrust. In the end, the Progressive's (and their presidential candidate Teddy Roosevelt's) response to industrializing imperialism was manipulating the monetary supply, democratizing various organs of bourgeois management and breaking up the monopolies.

The aim of the Socialist Party of Debs was to realize the constitution by completing it. The basis of the working-class demand for their fair share of labor's product was bourgeois right itself. This meant that the American working class demanding their bourgeois right was already the German and Russian working class demanding theirs. The global subject of labor was already beyond the nationalist state-Bonapartist form: the task of liberalism had fallen to the global working class. Therefore, only the international working class as a self-conscious political force could realize the aim of the Founding Fathers, namely an internally self-regulating and self-expanding union of liberty.

The horizon of the 19th century

Nothing essential changed about this progressive approach when the familied heir of Roosevelt the First in response to the Great Depression offered the American electorate a New Deal. The liberal progressive wing of FDR's New Deal Coalition was split in two. Some around Richberg and Berry said that what was needed was greater cooperation either between monopolized capital and the state or between the trusts and cartels as mediated by the state. The American worker was crucified on the cross of competition: the anarchic production conditions required greater cooperation at the productive level between the owners of the means of production, and ultimately between them and labor. This was decried by their opponents as price-fixing for a privileged few. Against this, the opponents said the American worker was crucified on the cross of cooperation: too much monopoly, feudalistic chain-stores eating up mom and pop. They went so far as to declare on radio that the 80 great families had entered into a capital-strike, refusing to invest their proceeds to the good of society for their own gain. The only force adequate to this state-mediated contradiction between cooperation and competition would have been the self-conscious party of the working class.[6]

The path that was taken was the middling sort that was truer to progressivism's (Greenback) origins in the Civil War and the expanded Bonapartist state-apparatus it had erected. The progressive achievement of the New Deal was simply the expansion of the federal executive over monetary and fiscal policy. Central to this democratic ideal was the right of the people to a say in the distributions of the cuts of national capital as mediated by the international Bonapartist state — or to say the same, the right of the people to the cuts of international capital by means of the national Bonapartist state. A Lassallean-Bismarckian mode of redistributing the cuts of capital, this was then the democratic ideal implemented by the Democratic Party after Bretton Woods for the right of the nation to national self-determination: it concerns the right of the 'people' in managing their own labor-and-capital racket. It is the democratic nation-state specification of the Wilsonian League of Nations, and it is in terms of this ideal of democratic self-determination that the former colonies become nations.

This language of New Deal progressive liberalism is, for example, the self-conscious ideal of *Jacobin* magazine, who orient from 1976 Swedish social democracy.[7] The authors around *Jacobin* support a federal jobs guarantee harkening back to FDR's proposed economic bill of rights. They argue that closing the persistent unemployment gap through a federal jobs guarantee will stabilize the economy by reducing poverty and that it will put the profoundly unequal nature of work — both its content and its distribution — into question.[8] This Federal Jobs Guarantee is then seen by Bhaskar Sunkara as a 'transitional policy' on the way to building socialism.[9]

The problem is that Sunkara and the authors at *Jacobin* consider the implementation of various federal-executive programs such as the guarantee of labor *as themselves* socialism. In this way they confuse means and ends: the end that socialists originally had in mind was building the *party* for socialism, that is, building the social-political force out of the working-class that could itself see to it that state and industry cooperate in such a way as to render both irrelevant. Instead, what Sunkara does is to reify the New Deal state-cooperatist vision of 1930s progressive liberalism, make the Democratic Party the end and aim of political consciousness, and trade the self-organization of the working-class for reliance on the Bonapartist state to

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